IT DIRECTOR REQUIREMENTS, SKILLS & SALARIES

Organizations of all shapes and sizes rely on IT for practically every part of their operations. As business becomes more connected and digitized, it is crucial that companies, no matter the industry, entrust the supervision of the IT department to an experienced and knowledgeable professional: the IT director.

Given the high-impact role, what types of skills might a qualified IT director need to possess in order to meet the expectations of the position? What types of requirements might an organization ask for when searching to fill the role? And what salary should a potential candidate look for when applying?

We have answered all of these questions and more to provide the best background possible about IT director requirements, skills, and salaries.

What is an IT Director?

Nearly every sizable organization has at least one IT director, with many companies even having more than one. Depending on the scale and purpose of a company, the role of the director of technology can vary greatly—the larger the company, the more IT directors there may be.

For the IT director, some responsibilities may include overseeing the infrastructure of technical operations, managing a team of IT employees, and tracking technology in order to:

- Achieve business goals

- Minimize security risks
- Increase user satisfaction
- Maintain operations and systems

There are a variety of names this role might be listed as, including Director of Technology, Senior IT Director, Director of Information Technology. Generally, all of these names describe the same general set of job requirements.

Roles & responsibilities

Directors of IT play a crucial role in their companies' overarching IT management, and they are often responsible for the broad maintenance of the functionality, security, and accessibility of all computer resources within the organization. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Networking equipment
- Computer hardware and software
- Data storage infrastructure
- Web applications, including SaaS, PaaS, and IaaS

Although this doesn't cover them entirely, and every role will be different depending on the specific industry and company the position oversees, some other general responsibilities that a director of technology might expect include:

- Developing and overseeing SMART goals for hardware, software, and storage
- Ensuring strategic capacity planning
- Managing all or part of the IT department, including:
  - Directly supervising some employees
  - Hiring certain members
  - Handling employees' concerns and performances
  - Communicating with the technology team and other departments as collaboration requires

- Determining business requirements for IT systems
- Identifying and eliminating security vulnerabilities with strategic solutions that increase data security
- Directing and supporting the implementation of new software and hardware
- Identifying and recommending new technology solutions
- Managing the organization's help desk (internal, external, or both)
- Coordinating IT activities to ensure data availability and network services with as little downtime as necessary
- Overseeing departmental finances, including budgeting and forecasting
- Implementing executive policies
- Reporting back to the C-suite

IT directors often work closely with the chief technology officer (CTO) and other executives to ensure that all business-critical systems are operating smoothly.

IT director skills needed

The IT director will need to have a balance of internal and external perspective:

- Looking inwards towards their team and responsible technologies
- Looking outwards to understand the unique business needs across various departments within the company

As such, the necessary professional skills require wide breadth, perhaps more than expertise in a one single area. The skills needed to be a successful IT director include:

Technical skills

Although the IT director might not be the person directly maintaining or fixing the systems, it is going to be important for them to have technical skills and knowledge in order to understand what is going on within the infrastructure.

Communication skills

Given the fact that the IT director serves as a go-between for the senior-level executives and the IT department, having strong communication skills will be crucial, both written and verbal. This role also requires the need to cooperate and collaborate with employees, with both technical and non-technical colleagues.

(Explore other [soft skills](#) useful in tech work.)

Leadership skills

As a leader of multiple teams and employees, it goes without saying that leadership skills are necessary in order to be a successful IT director. These skills are going to be needed to not only motivate teams, but to help move the department towards its goals.

(Explore [leadership skills](#) for tech roles.)

Analytical skills

Having an analytical mindset to develop and utilize reliable metrics will help the qualified director of IT to generate solutions to a wide array of technology-related problems. The director must then be able to:

1. Take their analysis
2. Research the best solutions for it
3. Come to a final decision on the best way to solve it

(Learn more about [data analytics](#).)

Organizational skills

Staying organized and focused are more skills that are going to be necessary for any interested IT director. Being able to coordinate the work and schedules of many people across numerous departments requires someone who can multi-talk and juggle multiple responsibilities at a time. These tasks are to be completed while the director also manages their own workload and priorities.

Business skills

There are many parts of an IT director's job that do not include technical aspects, but rather, non-technical components that relate to business in general, including financial skills like budgeting, forecasting, and justifying.

By being familiar with business skills and having a managerial role within the company, the director of IT can better help to develop and implement plans to achieve the organization's tech goals.

(Explore our [IT Cost Management Guide](#).)

IT director education & requirements

Common requirements for a director of technology position include:

- A bachelor's degree in programming, computer science, computer engineering, or another related field with advanced course experience in mathematics, computer programming, and [software development](#)
- Several years' experience managing employees within an IT environment
- Several years' experience working with particular systems that are relevant to the company (For instance, EMR/EHR systems in healthcare technology, or finance-specific databases for mutual funds and banking institutions)

Due to the complex nature of this senior position, many larger organizations may require their director of IT to hold a graduate degree, such as an MBA or an MS in information technology. Both of these will only enhance the director's knowledge base, not to mention increase their abilities to manage and oversee large teams of people.

It is not typically required for IT directors to be an expert in multiple [programming languages](#) or certified in every network, but instead they must possess a broad understanding of tech theories and applications from a macro-level. It is also important to understand [new trends and shifts in technology](#), considering what may benefit the IT department while balancing the organization's business needs and budget.

Peers & reporting

Looking up the career ladder, a director of technology often reports directly to the [Chief Technology Officer](#) (CTO), providing updates and requesting resource support for the entire technology team that the director oversees.

Within the role, the director will likely oversee one or several IT teams and may work alongside several other IT directors, all with responsibilities around various technologies and team functions.

Just as important as who the director of technology reports to is who the director of technology oversees and leads. While a director's role seems to cover a lot of systems, it's really the people [that the director oversees](#). A director of technology is likely responsible for answering these questions:

- Are [individual IT teams](#) achieving their goals?
- Are the teams having issues bringing their product or solution to the finish line?
- Are other departments supporting the IT department in providing the necessary support, resources, infrastructure, etc.?

The ways these questions will be answered depend on a lot of factors including the size of the company, the technologies deployed, the overarching philosophy of tech within the enterprise, and the scope of the director of technology.

Of course, the organization's industry will have an impact on the job itself, as well. Education, government, non-profit, and healthcare sectors combined comprise nearly one-third of the director of technology positions nationwide. Smaller percentages go to financial, business, and software services, respectively.

Professional development for IT directors

It's smart for leaders to partake in professional development opportunities in order to stay abreast of the latest trends, emerging management theories, and how innovation is changing the field.

A few different options for continued education include certifications for IT directors. These certifications can help directors to not only be more effective in their role, but to be more competitive in the job market, as well.

CompTIA A+ Certification

Offered by the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA), this certification is seen as an industry standard for IT professionals. It helps candidates troubleshoot and solve technical problems, as well as teaching how to understand a variety of issues, from operating systems and networking, to mobile devices and security.

CompTIA Network+

This certification from CompTIA also verifies that candidates have the necessary skills to design, configure, maintain, and troubleshoot wired and wireless devices.

CompTIA Security+

This certification covers best practices for both IT networks and operational security, verifying that the candidate has the required skills to keep an organization's data secure.

Continuous learning

Remember, though, that professional development doesn't have to be formal. Some of the best ways to continue developing as a director are to stay curious and to partner with a mentor.

- **Staying curious.** This can be as simple as a reading up on trade magazines or business journals that illustrate innovations in IT and cross-sectional fields. Another option is to attend conferences within the field that can provide new networking opportunities as well as providing information on the latest trends and technologies.
- **Seeking a mentor.** A mentor could be someone who shows other ways of doing things, based on his or her own experience. This person could be more senior directors within the IT department, non-IT directors within the company, and even directors or executives outside of the company altogether. Their experiences can display different approaches to IT and management thinking. Plus, their advice can provide support should professional roadblocks occur.

Salary & job outlook

Despite all of the necessary skills and required responsibilities, IT directors in the U.S. are highly compensated, with the median salary across private, government, and non-profit sectors clocking in at just above U.S. $142,500.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that the demand for directors of technology will grow about 12% by 2026, much faster than the national average of all occupations (average 8%). This increased demand for such candidates stems from the growth into digital platforms that nearly all businesses will adopt, especially the expedited digital transformations companies have been taking as a result of the pandemic. In addition, they'll need directors and managers to implement these growth goals.

Summing up IT directors

IT directors must possess a wide variety of skills, from technical know-how and knowledge to communication and leadership. This role encompasses many responsibilities and requirements that will only continue to become more complex as technology evolves, especially given the latest push at strong digital initiatives.

With the right person, this role will prove to have a major impact on the IT department, and the organization as a whole.

Related reading

- [BMC Business of IT Blog](#)
- [Common Roles in Cloud Computing](#)
- [IT Operations (ITOps) Roles & Responsibilities](#)
- [I&O Organizations Defined: Roles, Structures & Trends](#)
- [IT Salary Trends](#)
- [Top Paying IT Certifications](#)